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The Irish Times - Saturday, November 14, 2009

Recession 'a burden on mental health'

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FIONA GARTLAND

THE FALL-OUT from the recession has provoked new burdens on mental health, President Mary McAleese has said.

Speaking at the College of Psychiatry of Ireland's winter conference in Dublin yesterday, the President said more openness and understanding was key to changing attitudes about mental health.

Mrs McAleese warned delegates of the effects of the recession on mental health. She said there were "pervasive, high levels of anxiety and worry about the economy".

A buoyant economy with almost full employment had given way with "appalling suddenness and severity" to a recession and a litany of hard to digest bad news.

"The fall-out from the recession has provoked added or new burdens which are now sorely testing the coping skills and the emotional resilience of individuals, families and communities," she said.

The continuing stigma and taboo around acknowledging mental health problems was a big barrier to accessing proper help.

Mrs McAleese said mental health was often "the Cinderella issue". "Yet as we know from the self-harm and suicide statistics, there is a bleak landscape of mental suffering that we need to colonise with meaningful and accessible help and prevention strategies," she said.

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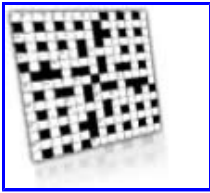
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